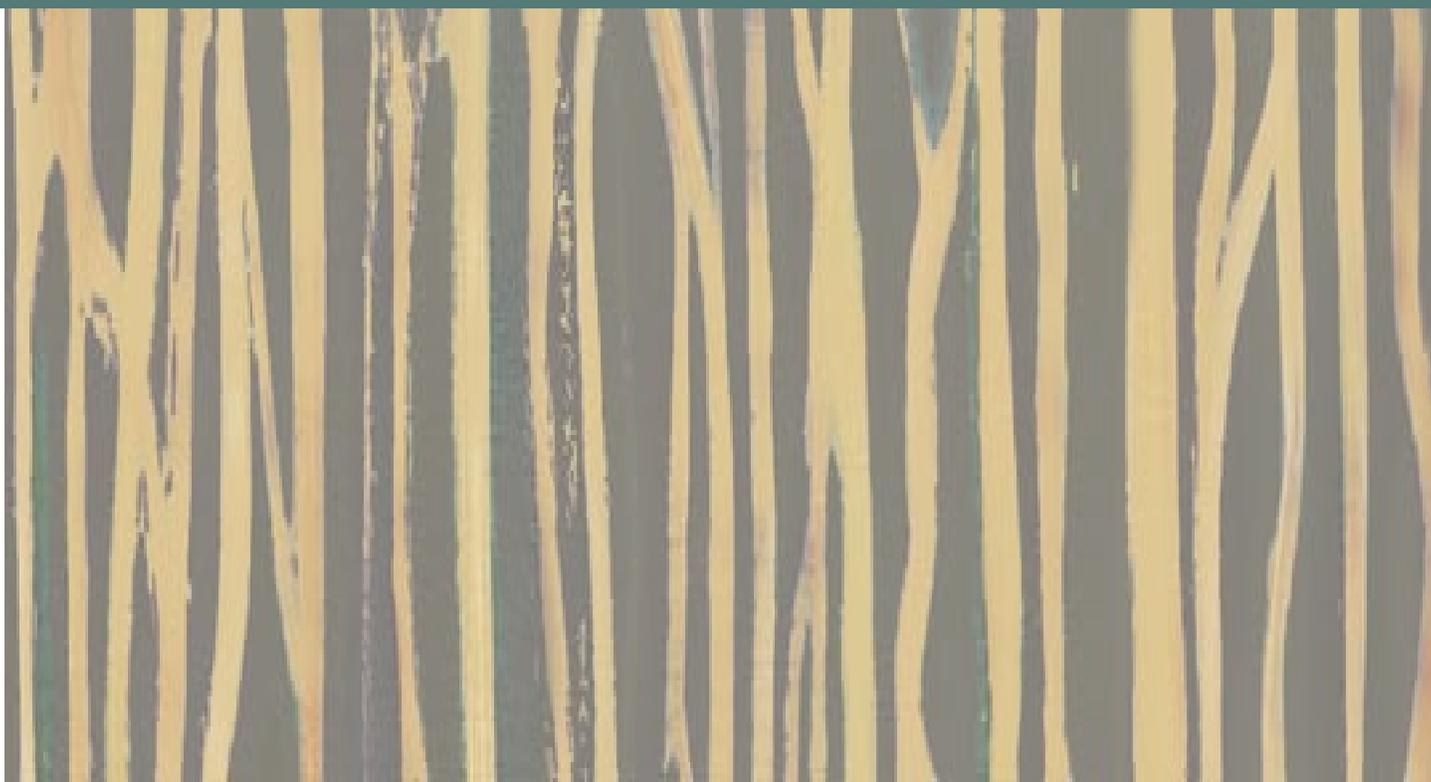


ISSUED BY



ROOTING OUT POVERTY:

A Campaign by America's Community Action Network



Public Law 88-452

August 20, 1964
[S. 2642]

AN ACT

To mobilize the human and financial resources of the Nation to combat poverty in the United States.

Economic Opportunity Act of 1964.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That this Act may be cited as the "Economic Opportunity Act of 1964".

FINDINGS AND DECLARATION OF PURPOSE

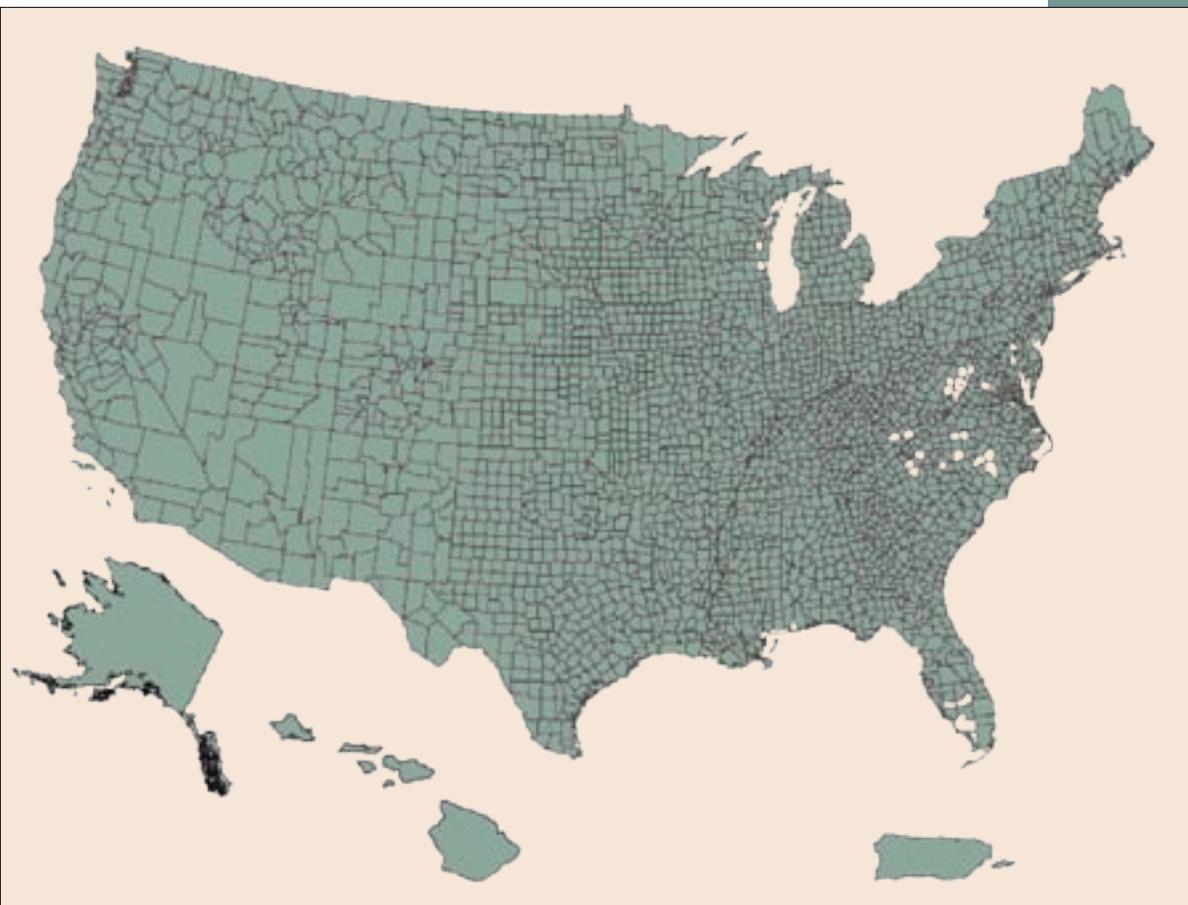
SEC. 2. Although the economic well-being and prosperity of the United States have progressed to a level surpassing any achieved in world history, and although these benefits are widely shared throughout the Nation, poverty continues to be the lot of a substantial number of our people. The United States can achieve its full economic and social potential as a nation only if every individual has the opportunity to contribute to the full extent of his capabilities and to participate in the workings of our society. It is, therefore, the policy of the United States to eliminate the paradox of poverty in the midst of plenty in this Nation by opening to everyone the opportunity for education and training, the opportunity to work, and the opportunity to live in decency and dignity. It is the purpose of this Act to strengthen, supplement, and coordinate efforts in furtherance of that policy.

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ROOTING OUT POVERTY: A CAMPAIGN BY AMERICA'S COMMUNITY ACTION NETWORK



Community Action Agencies serve more than 99% of U.S. counties.

WHAT THE CAMPAIGN IS AND HOW IT ORIGINATED

Rooting Out Poverty is the bedrock of a national campaign, led by the Community Action agencies — more than 1,000 — that form America’s Community Action Network. It is based on more than four decades of helping people who are poor move to economic security. It is grounded in experience and tested by time. We know that more can be done — more must be done — to reduce and eliminate the poverty that limits the future for more than one in ten Americans.

This is a strategic document. It frames our campaign, but it permits the flexibility and adaptability that we have proved are hallmarks of success in this work. At the national level, the Community Action Partnership, the National Community Action Foundation, CAPLAW, and the National Association for State Community Service Programs (see page 33) have helped coordinate work leading to this campaign. But this is a nationwide campaign for action that seeks to reach, educate, and inform every American about the fact that the current extent of poverty in America is intolerable — and correctable. We issue a call to action and ask a commitment to establishing opportunities and pathways to make it possible for those now living in economic insufficiency to move up to self-sufficiency.

Community Action agencies and others working against poverty began the discussion that led to this campaign in the National Conversation on Poverty and Economic Security, including the May 2007 symposium attended by more than 300 people from across the nation. Approximately six dozen recommendations emerged; these were reviewed at member meetings of Community Action Partnership and the National Association for State Community Service Programs. The National Steering Committee provided more structured guidance toward the final document in October 2007. This report was also shared in draft with member and affiliate organizations by the Community Action Partnership, to widen opportunities for comment.

HOW THIS REPORT CAN HELP GET THE JOB DONE

This report is a rallying point for practical action. Whoever you are, wherever you live, you can help people move themselves toward economic health. If you join us in seeking a community where all contribute and where the economy works for everyone, if you believe that people must be involved in shaping their own futures, and if you believe that communities and nations must commit to investing in positive futures for all, then our report and our campaign invite you to join us.

This campaign is a call for action. This report can help guide state and local programming, generate community-wide discussions, stimulate new ideas, reframe and refocus work, bring together agencies on a regional or state-wide basis, or provide a framework for training and professional development to reach our objectives. The report can help explain the benefits of the Community Action Network to local leaders — ranging from religious leaders to legislators, from educators to law enforcement officers, from health department leaders to local and state budget officials. Use it, adapt it to local needs and conditions, and promote locally grounded action as the driving force to root out poverty.

This is a report for the nation — not just for Community Action Agencies. The campaign summons all of us to generate economic and social changes that will lift up our own neighborhoods and communities as well of those less well off. Pages 18 and 19 highlight some of the many ways everyone can take action using this report. This is a report for a more just, more economically stable, more future-focused national policy that helps people and communities reach their full potential.

Welcome to the Campaign!

For more than four decades, the nation's Community Action Agencies have been on the front lines of the battle to reduce poverty. Our work is grounded in helping people and changing lives. We build on the principles of citizen participation, advocacy, leveraging resources, and providing effective services. The Community Action Network was born in a period of great optimism. We embraced Dr. King's dream of an America free from discrimination and poverty, and we continue to do so.

Community Action has been the nation's laboratory for developing and refining many innovative poverty reduction initiatives. We have helped millions of individuals and families to achieve self-sufficiency and economic security. We have helped thousands of communities — urban, suburban, and rural — through our housing, energy conservation, health services, water projects, and local economic development programs. Community Action Agency boards include program participants, civic leaders, and public officials, which helps ensure that action is focused on community needs as the core of each organization's work.

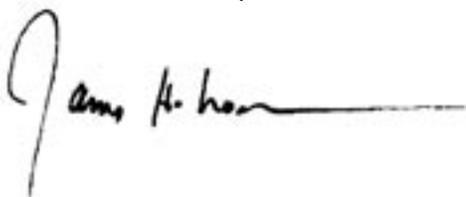
Community Action Agencies have learned that reducing poverty is a complex endeavor and that eliminating poverty is an even more daunting task. But is it not our moral obligation and responsibility to create an economy that works for everyone? It can be done, and we need to muster the will to make it happen.

Rooting Out Poverty, our national campaign, draws from the experience of Community Action Network agencies. The campaign's five action themes are accompanied by suggested strategies that may be tailored to local conditions.

The key word in all of this is ACTION. We know it works and we need your help. Use this report to help generate action and enlist more support at the community, state, and national levels to help reduce and eliminate poverty.



James Norman, President and CEO, Action for a Better Community, Inc., Rochester, New York, is Chair of the Steering Committee

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James Norman". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Rooting Out Poverty

"Poverty has not disappeared. Even taking the most aggressive approach to these new statistics, about 5% of Americans, or about 15 million people, are living below the poverty line, with millions more living just above it. And, as the post-Katrina images have reminded us, there are still large pockets of deep poverty and social deprivation."

Douglas J. Besharov, American Enterprise Institute, in testimony before the Subcommittee on Income Security and Family Support, Committee on Ways & Means, U.S. House of Representatives, August 1, 2007



Homeless San Diego woman seeks rest in affluent urban park.

FIVE ACTION THEMES FOR ROOTING OUT POVERTY

These five action themes help focus the work of rooting out poverty on national, state, and local levels. They embrace work by faith groups, local governments, civic organizations, social service agencies, business groups, and neighborhood organizations, as well as individuals, rich, poor, and in between.

The themes are designed to be flexible and adaptable, grounded in the needs of each community. They are framed in positive terms — the desired outcomes that we all share — with strategies toward those outcomes.



MAXIMIZE PARTICIPATION

MAXIMIZE PARTICIPATION

Engage as many people and groups as possible — especially those who might otherwise be voiceless in the community — in making it possible for people and communities to help themselves and each other achieve their full potentials.

RESULT: Stronger, more responsive communities and broader range of people working together lead to more thoughtful and effective solutions to problems that cause or prolong poverty or limit economic opportunity.



BUILD AN ECONOMY THAT WORKS FOR EVERYONE

BUILD AN ECONOMY THAT WORKS FOR EVERYONE

Create and maintain economic mechanisms and innovative financing, that improve financial and economic conditions of all residents, especially those in need of workforce skills and positions. Develop a variety of work and career opportunities at pay levels that reward effort and skill appropriately. Engage the nation's sense of economic justice in local, state, and national economic development initiatives.

RESULT: More broadly based and more effective economies provide better job opportunities and wage levels for all.



INVEST FOR THE FUTURE

INVEST FOR THE FUTURE

Provide education, workforce training, infrastructure, and protection of vital assets (including clean air and water, renewable energy, and a healthy global ecosystem) to help people and communities to improve the quality of life, increase economic opportunity, and anticipate future individual and community needs.

RESULT: Education and skill levels rise for all; sound policies and practices protect and preserve vital assets, leading to greater capacity to meet challenges of the future.

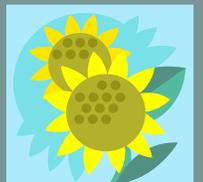


MAXIMIZE EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY

MAXIMIZE EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY

Remove barriers and roadblocks; create public policies programs, and initiatives (including enforcement strategies) that ensure maximum opportunity for all those seeking to improve their situations, skills, and futures. Ensure that opportunities are fully accessible and widely promoted.

RESULT: More people and communities can reach their full potentials through a greater range of opportunities in a wider variety of situations.



ENSURE HEALTHY PEOPLE & PLACES

ENSURE HEALTHY PEOPLE AND PLACES

The physical, environmental, and personal health of individuals, families, and communities is essential to their abilities to maximize potential, take advantage of opportunity, and invest for the future. Accessible, affordable health care is essential; poorer people are disproportionately more likely to forego preventive care and to postpone treatment for health problems, which increase the physical damage, the economic loss and the cost of care. Attention to health care needs pays multiple dividends. Communities that strive for healthy environments — free of pollution, toxic waste, and environmental degradation — benefit their citizens physically and socially, increase their long-term attractiveness to employers, and make themselves more appealing to new residents.

RESULT: Healthier people reduce medical costs; increase well-being; and improve quality of life, better enabling people to avoid or advance out of poverty. Communities that are safe and environmentally healthy improve their attractiveness and their economic as well as physical health.

MAXIMIZE PARTICIPATION

The first thing to maximize is participation by those who are seeking economic self-sufficiency. “Maximum feasible participation” by those seeking to avoid or escape poverty has remained a hallmark of Community Action Agencies for years, not just because it was required, but because it works. Participation in programs and activities invests, involves, and engages participants not just in their own self-betterment, but in using their skills and potential to help other people and the whole community. Participation in a governance system — a local organization’s board, a community committee, a school management system — helps people demonstrate their competencies and build a sense of ownership, pride, and engagement. Equally important, it ensures that the voices of those most affected are heard where they can do the most good.

The second thing to maximize is participation by other agencies and organizations. Poverty is a condition with many causes and many cures. Neighborhood, community, state, or national partnerships and cooperative efforts leverage assets, widen vision, open opportunities, and generate creativity. Result: Stronger, more responsive communities and a broader range of people working together lead to more thoughtful and effective solutions.

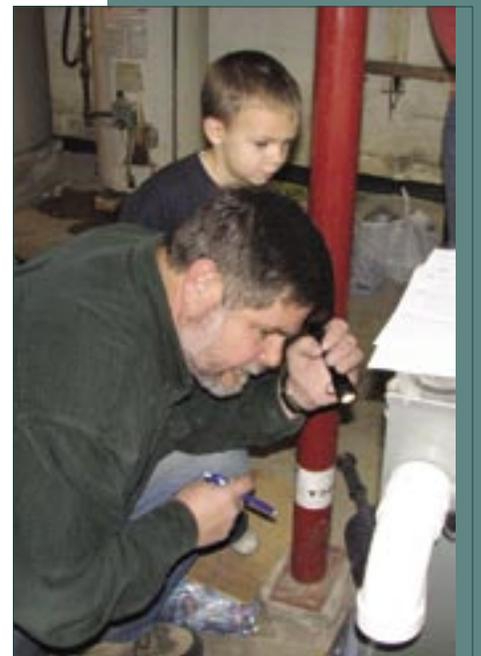
Participation must be sincere, fully accepted, and equal. Those who participate may need or benefit from coaching, and their authentic viewpoints and voices must be respected. Participation must also be pervasive. Token roles on a token board will quickly destroy any positive message.

SOME STRATEGIES TO MAXIMIZE PARTICIPATION

- Promote voting by all eligible people and remove barriers to exercising the vote.
- Work to ensure fully accessible voting places with appropriate voter assistance.
- Develop advocacy strategies that provide opportunities for all to participate effectively.
- Enable Community Action leaders to seek community, state, or national positions.
- Help organizations identify and benefit from the concept of maximizing participation in their organizations’ work with people.
- Create effective, authentic evaluation systems for programs and organizations, securing useful feedback from participants and demonstrating that the feedback has been effectively heard.



MAXIMIZE
PARTICIPATION



A Community Action Agency staff member conducts an energy audit with help from a 3-year-old resident in Westmoreland, NY. Audit findings help target weatherization work.



MAXIMIZE PARTICIPATION

- Form alliances and partnerships among national, state, and local organizations, including bipartisan and nonpartisan coalitions, to promote effective and responsive policies and programs.
- As permitted by law, conduct voter registration and get-out-the-vote drives for all areas of the community.
- Conduct issues forums for public officials and for candidates for office.
- Develop and deliver training for community members in public education and advocacy.
- Make sure that organizations' strategic plans include education and advocacy with key public officials and other community leaders about the need for appropriate local actions in the five theme areas.

These strategies and those in the other four theme areas represent efforts at local levels that have proved effective. They are by no means exhaustive; they are presented as inspirations to action.

Children need positive adult role models, both male and female. This young man fills that need through KIND (Kids in Need of Dads) for Head Start/Early Head Start classes in Ohio.



BUILD AN ECONOMY THAT WORKS FOR EVERYONE

An economy that provides a wide range of jobs; that adapts to global changes; that values and offers education and training to children, youth, and adults; that takes a long-term perspective; and that addresses financial and economic conditions of all residents will provide more opportunities, better-quality jobs, and improved access to economic well-being. Such an economy will also build a sense of equal opportunity and economic justice.

An economy that works for everyone provides incentives built on a baseline of equity and opportunity; offers financial and economic education to all; it promotes sound savings and wise spending. It will do so in ways that communicate effectively with the full range of audiences that make up this nation, especially those who have the fewest resources. It will seek to be a rising tide that indeed lifts all boats.

An economy that works for everyone eliminates structural inequalities as wasteful and inefficient. It helps its members adapt to and excel at the increasingly knowledge-based economy while accommodating other needed skills and work styles. It works with educational systems to provide sound preparation for future workforces and provides training as a good investment to its current workforces.

An economy that works for everyone generates sufficient resources to ensure that the needs of special populations — the elderly, the infirm, the poor — are met in the proper form and spirit.

SOME STRATEGIES TO BUILD AN ECONOMY THAT WORKS FOR EVERYONE

- Educate all elements of the community on the numerous benefits of a healthy, thriving economy that meets the widest possible range of community needs.
- Enlist local economic institutions and agencies as partners in education, outreach, and advocacy.
- Develop government-supported or -based alternatives for those just learning employment skills or acquiring financial literacy.
- Recognize and employ appropriate strategies to compensate for the global nature of today's economy, including investment and retraining strategies to help workers continue or upgrade employment.
- Establish policies, programs, and practices that make conservation of resources socially and economically attractive.
- Ensure that people with limited resources have access to affordable energy supplies.



BUILD AN ECONOMY THAT WORKS FOR EVERYONE



BUILD AN ECONOMY THAT
WORKS FOR EVERYONE

- Develop and implement policies to support transportation systems that effectively serve those most in need at prices they can afford.
- Encourage and support U.S. corporations to conduct business in ways that promote and support economic security and economic justice, especially for those who are out of the economic mainstream.
- Encourage national support of international organizations that oversee sound and safe labor, manufacturing, and economic policies in countries with which the U.S. does business.
- Provide appropriate language skills, financial literacy, economic literacy, and related education and training for all Americans.
- Support and promote asset-building and asset-focused strategies to help generate positive capacities for those seeking to leave or avoid poverty.
- Promote a variety of tools to encourage savings, including Individual Development Accounts (IDAs) and similar vehicles, especially for those who otherwise lack capital formation skills or opportunities.
- Provide training, opportunities, and proper support for those seeking to invest in small business or microenterprise development.
- Help communities put into place systems that enable their members to get the skills to secure and keep the jobs they want.

Sharing
perspective with
state legislators
builds common
ground for
strategies that
strengthen local
and statewide
economies in
Minnesota.



INVEST FOR THE FUTURE

Investing for the future means providing the training now to develop the knowledge and skills that today's children and workers will need for the jobs and industries of tomorrow. It means providing wide-ranging education in terms of subject, audience, and format. It means devising educational strategies that meet the needs of those outside traditional settings and that build the basic skills of those who may not have acquired them growing up.

It means encouraging K-12 schools, community colleges, technical schools, and colleges and universities to widen their perspectives and create well-grounded visions of the future — then meet those needs. Communities, states, and the nation all have roles to play in researching, developing, and coordinating these efforts and most importantly in seeing that all those who can possibly benefit from such learning (including the chronically poor) have every opportunity to gain the benefits.

Investing for the future means conserving resources and finding creative alternatives — building greener, smarter, and for the longer term; finding energy alternatives; conserving; and innovating. It also means husbanding all resources and setting standards of living that do not endorse waste.

Investing for the future means spending preventively — dealing with causes rather than with negative aftermaths. From this perspective, each of the other themes must draw on this one. Each must look preventively and positively toward the future in its own area.

But investing for the future is a core theme in its own right. Done properly, it preserves the good and averts the bad. It is also among the most demanding of themes, because it mandates a social willingness to defer gratification — a collective maturity that is willing to spend today's dollars for tomorrow's good.

Investing for the future can be a powerful energizer, signifying belief in and commitment to a bright promise for every community resident.

Investing for the future involves working on behalf of all age groups, for the benefit of all, with the interests of all in mind. If it is selfish ("my future or I don't play"), it is untrue to itself. Community Action Agencies are especially good places to muster energy for future investment, to help build the consensus and commitment that are vital to making these investments a powerful force.

Investing for the future requires the ability to look out for the well-being of people — of our environments, our creativity, and our potential to achieve. It requires willingness to seek potential, to take risks, and to look for promise. It requires thinking about both individuals and groups as they head toward the future. It also requires perceiving the wide variety of possible future paths and what actions can shape those paths toward desired outcomes. It is not for the faint of heart; it is for those who want to leave a legacy of a better world.



INVEST FOR THE FUTURE



A Ben & Jerry's PartnerShop works with a Minnesota Community Action organization to prepare youth for regular, unsubsidized employment.



INVEST FOR THE FUTURE

SOME STRATEGIES TO INVEST FOR THE FUTURE

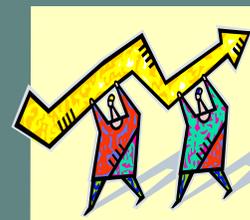
- Ensure that every child and his or her family will have access to high-quality early education and developmentally grounded day care, based on the best of the Head Start concept, to reduce future criminality, drug use, and family dysfunction and increase family well-being and children's achievement.
- Pay careful attention to closing the well-documented achievement gap that keeps poorer children from reaching the academic levels of their counterparts.
- Provide every child the opportunity and support to complete high school and to continue through college or technical training that meets his or her interests and capabilities, to better equip tomorrow's workers for the realities of the knowledge economy and increasingly complex technology use.
- Ensure that high-quality, adult-focused learning is available and accessible to all, in order to help workers gain or update skills, to provide support for job shifts in economic dislocations, to adapt to emerging technologies, and to provide opportunities for career redirection.
- Value and promote civic engagement and active community membership at all levels of education with the goal of helping young people become adults who sustain their commitment to active roles in civic life because they see the importance of that contribution.
- Provide universal, quality health care that includes emphasis on preventive strategies and health education to improve health at all ages.
- Teach personal and family financial literacy and lifelong financial health from early childhood through adulthood in age-appropriate ways, including wise savings, asset building, and smart spending.

Head Start gives a valuable leg up on a good education and success throughout school and life for these Oklahoma youngsters.



- Develop and promote social, economic, and political strategies that respect all persons, provide for full opportunity for all, and promote equal treatment for all.
- Establish strong incentives and sanctions to encourage energy saving measures and conservation of resources, both short-term and long-term, for businesses and individuals.

- Design communities to maximize foot traffic, public transportation, and neighborhood services to help build social capital, conserve resources, and reduce pollution.
- Establish programs and policies that ensure reasonable energy sources and prices for people facing economic challenges.
- Develop and consistently implement conservation and pollution prevention policies for U.S. resources and use U.S. leverage to engage other nations in appropriately similar practices.
- Rework the definition of poverty so it reflects what has been learned about the continuum of poverty and the actual costs of living a safe and healthful life in the U.S. today, so that future programs will provide realistic and fair levels of assistance.
- Increase sustainable green space that is easily accessible to all residents of communities.
- Use tax and economic policies to support and encourage small businesses formation and personal savings by people of all income levels to promote economic growth.



INVEST FOR THE FUTURE



A program needs a home and these Arkansas residents break ground for a new community services center that will house multiple programs under one roof — convenient and cost-effective thinking!



MAXIMIZE EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY

MAXIMIZE EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY

Maximizing equality of opportunity means providing access to and the ability to take advantage of chances for personal and professional growth and advancement. It means not a classless society but one in which success is reliant on individual achievement. It guarantees that if someone — no matter his or her background — wishes to strive for something better, there will be a fair starting platform for that effort and no irrelevant barriers along the way.

Put another way, every American has the right to expect a level playing field — the right to expect that laws, rules, and regulations provide an equal base, an equal boost, and relevant criteria.

Maximizing equality of opportunity both drives and relies on the other four action themes in this report. Unless the economy works for everyone, unless participation is broad and maximized, unless there are healthy communities and people from which participants come, and unless there is commitment to investing for the future, there may well be no opportunity at all.

Maximizing equality of opportunity is a major benefit to all of society. It enables the community and the nation to discover talents that might otherwise go untapped; it promotes a desire to strive because there is a greater chance of success.

Maximizing equality of opportunity is at the heart of America's most prized values. The Declaration of Independence reminds us that "all...are created equal (and) endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights...life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." Happiness is not guaranteed, but the opportunity to pursue it is guaranteed by one of our most sacred documents.

This newly graduated Georgia physician got his start in Head Start. His community continued to support him throughout college and medical school by believing in him, keeping in touch, raising funds for his education, and providing "care packages" and household furnishings through the years.



SOME STRATEGIES TO MAXIMIZE EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY

- Help formalize government commitments to reducing and preventing poverty by insisting that specific action objectives are set and progress is monitored.
- Publicize and educate people on how to tap into various opportunities, reaching outside the mainstream and outside traditional communications channels.
- Ensure that all anti-discrimination laws are fairly enforced at all levels of government.
- Ensure enforcement of equality of opportunity with clear rules and regulations, an uncomplicated complaint system, and sufficient and well-trained investigators and prosecutors.

- Provide guidance and training for those seeking to shift or upgrade work skills during their careers, at all levels of work.
- Repeal or properly amend laws and regulations that perpetuate structural discrimination.
- Develop programs to make it easier for people to become more involved in the political process at all levels.
- Elect officials who are familiar with the Community Action approach and its value.
- Conduct programs and events that help all elements in communities come together to learn to appreciate and value each other.
- Develop diverse networks of strong, positive mentors to support promising young people from all parts of the community.
- Ensure that government and nonprofit sector programs are available to all, with offerings in as many languages and cultural traditions as needed, and provide key public service officials (e.g. police) access to appropriate training and advice on dealing with diverse cultures.
- Develop educational outreach to groups that may not be aware of various opportunities; provide training that is relevant to their cultural backgrounds and presented with the appropriate language support.



MAXIMIZE EQUALITY OF
OPPORTUNITY



A Michigan Community Action Agency gave all kinds of people the chance to be part of its **Walk for Warmth** teams, raising funds to provide heating bill support for less well-off families.



ENSURE HEALTHY PEOPLE AND PLACES

ENSURE HEALTHY PEOPLE AND PLACES

Healthy people living in healthy places are more likely to achieve their potential, to be productive taxpayers as adults, and to contribute to community life than their counterparts. People out of the economic mainstream are disproportionately challenged with health problems, many of which could have been forestalled or sharply reduced with the kind of preventive and early intervention care often out of their economic reach.

Healthy people and places mean that people are sick less often, injured less often, victimized by crime less often, and more capable of living up to their full potential.

Healthy people will have access to adequate health care and will be more likely to engage in preventive practices, to have illnesses detected earlier, and to ensure that children and elders receive prompt high quality care — thus reducing medical costs to the economy overall.

Healthy people are more productive. They miss less work, do a better job when at work, are subject to fewer infectious diseases, and are better able to take part in the community. They are not addicted to drugs or other substances. They are less costly to the health care system and less likely to burden those systems.

Healthy places certainly include homes that are secure against wind and weather; that provide adequate plumbing, clean water, code-compliant electrical service, and sanitary and other services; that provide locks and other physical security against burglars and other criminals.

Healthy places also include pollution-free water and air, safe streets, and ample parks and other green spaces, as well as opportunities for exercise and recreation. They also encompass safe, healthy work-places, whatever the type of work involved. Healthy places increase the physical and even the emotional health of their residents.

Healthy places offer environmental and physical health, healthful opportunities in safe work surroundings, and facilities to help children grow up healthy and older residents enjoy the healthiest status possible.

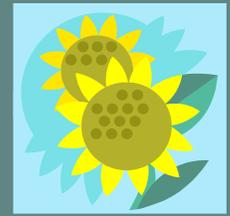
Healthy people living in healthy places are less costly, more productive, and more engaged. They learn better, live longer, enjoy life more, and contribute more to the world around them.



Well-child checkups can spot and even solve potential problems before they become costly and debilitating major illnesses, which is why a California Community Action Partnership sponsors them.

SOME STRATEGIES TO ENSURE HEALTHY PEOPLE AND PLACES

- Provide State Children’s Health Insurance Program coverage to the children of working poor (up to 300 percent of Federal poverty level) and their parents.
- Make possible adequate, universal health care for infants, children, and adults, including dental, vision, and mental health care.
- Provide effective, accessible, affordable treatment for alcohol, drug and other dependencies.
- Develop and promote training in sound nutrition and assure access to adequate food supplies.
- Provide assistance to families in strengthening family stability and, where appropriate, sound parenting skills.
- Ensure that all new construction, especially residential housing, meets environmentally friendly (“green”) construction standards and maximum feasible energy conservation standards.
- Retrofit existing housing to ensure maximum possible “green” construction and energy conservation.
- Ensure that housing for lower-income families is properly weatherized against high heating and cooling costs.
- Make certain that appropriate laws and regulations are enforced to ensure physically safe housing for all.
- Recognize the right of all people to live in communities safe against crime and disorder, through such strategies as problem-oriented policing, community-focused policing, and community crime prevention.
- Design transportation systems so that they meet the needs of residents — workers and others — to reach jobs and services, connect with other parts of the community, and travel safely at the times they desire to do so, all at the lowest possible cost.
- Create new jobs and career opportunities in such future-oriented areas as alternative fuels for those unemployed or underemployed.



ENSURE HEALTHY PEOPLE
AND PLACES

Thanks to help from the local Community Action Agency in South Dakota, this single dad was able to buy a home for himself and his five children.



Though developed prior to these five themes, the Duluth, Minnesota **Blueprint to End Poverty** (see inside back cover) is a great example of clear, locally relevant goals that have wide support. Duluth has developed a Guiding Coalition and committees to focus on each of the plan's four areas.

HOW YOU CAN TAKE ACTION

The five themes that are the action focus of this national campaign are a framework. They represent a consensus among many people with both academic training and practical experience about the areas that must be addressed to reduce and prevent poverty in America.

What action needs to be taken, by whom, how, and when? Those answers are, in large measure, up to you. Community Action Agencies have learned that local situations, needs, and priorities differ widely across time and space. Local tools for action are seldom identical. Local networks and partnerships may vary widely.

But this national agenda provides a framework for determining what actions are or may be appropriate for your area. It offers a way both to organize the work to be done and to identify the benefits of that work.

Here are some suggestions for using this report:

- Find and get in touch with your local Community Action Agency to get involved. (See www.communityactionpartnership.com)
- Hold a meeting of the local Community Action Agency (or similar) board to examine the fit between the national campaign and the local organization's agenda.
- Conduct a community-wide meeting (or several if needed) to explore the ways in which various organizations are (or can be) involved in moving the national campaign forward locally.
- Assess the community's status with respect to the national agenda. The Community Action Agency's own needs assessment will be a good starting point, but go beyond to find out what else is being done (or not done).
- Develop a speakers' panel that can talk about the community's work to root out poverty, using the five themes. Prepare and share speaking notes that can help weave the story into presentations by many speakers in a variety of settings, describing the value of community work to help all members achieve their potential through fair opportunities for growth and self-improvement.
- Meet with local newspaper, broadcast, or cablecast editorial boards or directors. The five themes can form the base for a story on local efforts to reduce or eliminate poverty; they can also provide material for a series of stories on individualized successes and for editorial support.
- Consider a scorecard or a "thermometer" graphic that shows how well the organization or the community is doing in pursuit of its own agenda within the theme structure.

HOW YOU CAN TAKE ACTION

- Have someone in the community write up the local organization's actions around each theme. Offer these stories to local weekly newspapers, which will often keep stories on file for times when they have available space. (These are sometimes known as "evergreen" stories.)
- Develop, with local school officials or youth group leaders, a civics or social studies seminar that uses the five themes to look at local needs and efforts to reduce poverty. This could include causes, case studies, research in various areas, and more.
- Develop study-discussion-action guides that local adult groups — civic, fraternal, social, and faith-based — can employ to talk about poverty-related problems (and solutions) in your area. Include the roles of the local Community Action Agencies and their partners.
- Share the campaign and its five themes with local officials — agency chiefs, elected leaders, civic leaders and more. Prepare a briefing that different community leaders can give, especially current or successful clients. Ask how you can work together with local officials toward specific goals under the agenda's umbrella.
- Organize the local organization's work around the national campaign themes and ask other organizations to do the same, to help boost community commitment to these five areas. Other subject areas can be included depending on local needs.
- Consider setting local targets under the five themes and use them as a means of noting and celebrating progress.
- Collect and document examples of successes using the themes as a means of grouping and tracking them.
- Make sure state and national organizations know about your local uses of the campaign themes.



Speaking out at Missouri's state capitol, these Community Action leaders tell legislators about effective strategies for families striving for economic security.

MANY LINKED AND INFLUENTIAL ISSUES

Although *Rooting Out Poverty* has five major themes, there are many other areas of local, state, and national policy that may at first appear unrelated but can significantly affect the ability and opportunity of people seeking to achieve economic security. Over the past five decades, we have come to realize that these policies and programs must be part of the landscape. Energy availability and prices drive the costs of many vital services, ranging from heating and cooling to transportation. Oil price and supply additionally affect the costs of everything petrochemical. And increases in these costs disproportionately affect the ability of poorer people to earn a living. Thus energy prices and conservation are legitimate campaign issues.

Immigration has risen anew as a major concern among many Americans. Concern over discrimination and even legal action affect not only those here without legal sanction, but intimidate legitimate immigrants from seeking help for fear they will be subject to heavy scrutiny from the government. Immigrants who could benefit from assistance in anchoring their economic well-being may avoid any community organization for fear of challenge or discrimination. How immigrants are treated may directly affect their economic well-being and that of the whole community.

Discrimination is still an issue in our society. Though many strides have been made, a number of structural conditions and situations still place various groups disproportionately in poverty or poverty-inducing circumstances. These conditions must be monitored, reduced, and removed.

Unaffordable medical costs and services both in the community and in its neighborhoods may keep children and adults from receiving preventive care and early intervention services. They may turn minor illness into crisis. Prescription costs may drive the elderly to cut their medications in half or fail to take them at all, worsening their health. Those with chronic illnesses may get worse (and cost the system more) because they cannot afford stabilizing care.

Economic development policy may upgrade a neighborhood but leave its residents unable to afford the new shops or the transportation to less expensive stores. So-called big-box retailers may replace whole neighborhoods of small businesses with something less accessible and less flexible. The jobs provided may be a major benefit or an economic stagnation. Careful, thorough analysis is vital to community economic vitality.

Education policy may indeed leave children behind — leaving them without the skills to get and succeed in the kinds of jobs that are available in the market as it evolves into the future. The structural issues of school quality can increase a community's poverty rates two or even three decades later. And the effects of

education policy are not confined to K-12 education but go to workforce quality and economic health.

Lack of opportunities for high school graduates and older adults to upgrade education and skills may leave them unequipped for the jobs available. Public transportation policy may favor automobiles over mass transit, or it may reduce mass transit options. In some communities, bus schedules don't accommodate workers' hours. In others, transportation costs take a disproportionate amount of employee wages. Gasoline prices and long commutes may be the high price of affordable housing. The high costs of getting to and from work may well be the barrier to getting work.

U.S. trade policy and positions, as well as the realities of international trade in general, may take viable jobs from qualified workers and export those jobs overseas, thereby reducing work opportunities and the well-being of communities. The challenge is to develop new skills and better jobs for U.S. workers.

It is vital that those working to increase economic security, as well as to improve opportunity, recognize the many critical influences on their ability to succeed. They must be able to help policy makers in these fields understand the connection to poverty in the work and to understand the potential harm to those trying to avoid or arise from poverty that may come from seemingly unrelated decisions.

MANY LINKED AND INFLUENTIAL ISSUES



Above, energy-efficient housing replaces old dwelling, providing greater comfort at lower cost for this Tennessee resident.



Left, in upstate New York, public transportation may be inconvenient or nonexistent in rural areas. Seniors in this community get service through a convenient bus that gets them where they need to go, thanks to the local Community Action Agency.

Voices of poverty...

My Head Start teacher, Mrs. M, was there for me when my mom was “on vacation” (which I later learned meant drug treatment), and she taught me always to do my best. She made sure that I had clean clothes and that I got a good lunch and a warm smile every day. Today I’m a mom, and I run my own home cleaning business. I try to be there for my employees like Mrs. M was there for me.

When the company where I had worked went bankrupt, my pension vanished. I could barely afford Medicare and the heating bills were eating up my budget. Pretty soon, I could see no answer but selling the house. It wasn’t worth a whole lot, but I just couldn’t keep it up. The Community Action folks helped me with insulating the house and fixing the roof leak and the kitchen floor. They made sure I got to help them wherever I could. I’m still in my house, and I’m helping others at the Community Action Agency as a tax assistant!

THE MEANING OF POVERTY

Central to reducing and ameliorating poverty is how that condition is defined. Just what does it mean to “be poor”? Some would argue that they know poverty when they see it. Others would claim that people who are poor can tell you who they are. But this is not sufficient for effective public policy. Some specifics are necessary for clarity of program and purpose.

THE REALITY OF POVERTY

A widow may own a \$200,000 house but have no food in the pantry. A four-year-old enrolled in Head Start may wear the same two outfits for months because the family has no money for clothes since the mother, its breadwinner, was laid off. Lack of health insurance may drive a worker from the work force because he or she can’t afford the medicines that would stabilize the illness and make work possible. A newborn may not get well-baby care because there is no doctor his mother can get to who will accept Medicaid patients. That child becomes chronically ill and falls behind in school, forever impairing his capacity to make a living.

A neighborhood may lose its key economic facilities, such as a grocery store or a drug store, and the resulting diversion of economic activity can cause the other businesses to leave. A national crisis in mortgage lending may lead to a flood of foreclosures which in turn make normal resales almost impossible, driving down the value of housing stock and destroying neighborhood vitality and viability.

DEFINING POVERTY

In the 1960s, the Federal Government established a “poverty line” of income that divided the poor from everyone else. This established what social scientists call a dichotomous variable — one is either poor or “not poor” based on a specific income figure. The switch is either on or off. Federal programs still use that definition today, though its terms and conditions have been modified over the years.

Meanwhile, more than 40 years of experience of ongoing work to eradicate poverty have taught us that poverty is not a single condition, that there is no magic number that divides the poor from the rest of us. Instead, poverty has been recognized increasingly as a continuum — people may be extremely poor, very poor, somewhat poor, working poor, or emerging from poverty. There are different ways to be impoverished. For example, someone may be working but impoverished because there is no health insurance to assist the family with a catastrophic illness or injury. Someone may own his or her home but have no income for utilities and basic repairs.

Community Action Agencies have seen first-hand the challenges. They have dealt with the need for operationally relevant definitions of poverty that permit programs to work effectively to help move individuals, families, and neighborhoods

out of poverty using realistic measures that address the variety of causes, situations, and circumstances that it involves.

The idea that poverty should be measured on one or more continuums is powerful. If the various measures are well thought out, they can suggest not just the problems being faced but strategies for addressing them. A working group that is part of the National Conversation on Poverty is looking at ways of bringing together several continuums; this would create a much more realistic way of defining and describing poverty. It also could highlight links between problems. For example, the house-poor widow may qualify for Medicaid but not for transportation assistance. If she cannot get to a food pantry, her health may suffer because of poor nutrition. Recognizing these links helps make services more rational.

The process of creating an improved poverty measure will not be quick. The tool must be tested, refined, and accepted both by policymakers and budgeters and by people in the field delivering services. But without a new and more effective measure, those who work with poverty situations will be chained to the limitations of the on-off switch that is today's major national measure, which many agree distorts the reality of poverty and limits effective prevention and intervention.



However it's defined, poverty may be just a hot meal away for those with illnesses and limited resources. Mobile meals involve families in helping and provide a human touch in this Tennessee program.

PREVENTING POVERTY — A NATIONAL COMMITMENT

Americans have a long history of localized voluntary efforts to help the poor, especially children. These efforts have continued through to the present day. Modern government intervention to promote social and economic justice began, according to many, with the child labor laws of the early 20th century. Obviously the massive relief and support efforts of the Great Depression in the 1930's were a landmark shift from limited to significant government involvement in helping those less well off and providing government-subsidized or sponsored jobs.

Despite the economic prosperity of much of the immediate post-World War II era, many people still lived in poverty — sometimes because of official obstacles, sometimes because of ill health, sometimes because of lack of educational and other opportunity, sometimes because of lack of financial savvy. But there was no question that the historical U.S. poverty rate of 20 to 25 percent of the population was sustained through the 1950s.

Major government intervention to reduce or prevent poverty (outside of economic calamity) started with the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, proposed by President Lyndon Johnson. This legislation included Medicaid, Medicare, Job Corps, Head Start, and more. Data show that for children 0-16 and for adults over 64, poverty dropped sharply by the end of the first decade of these nationally led efforts. Through 2004, though, poverty rates for the 17- to 64-year-old group had not dropped significantly.

One of the inspired aspects of the legislation, in hindsight, was its emphasis on action grounded in community and maximizing the participation of those who are

Local, state, and federal officials joined a Pennsylvania Community Action Agency in celebrating the start of an urban renewal project that will remove a dilapidated building and create more than 40 new energy-efficient, single-family homes and townhouses. Community Action Agencies are often well-equipped to bring government agencies and businesses together to solve problems.



poor. The concept of letting the subjects be drivers of action was novel. The phrase “maximum feasible participation” became a bedrock of Community Action Agencies, who found energy, value, and reality in having what might have been their “clients” become their partners.

One signature legacy of the Economic Opportunity Act that thrives to this day is the concept of community-based comprehensive service anti-poverty agencies. Today, Community Action Agencies serve more than 99 percent of America’s counties, administering a wide range of programs from Head Start to workforce training, from economic development to elder care, from weatherization to treatment for alcohol and drug abuse. They partner with local, state, and national organizations and work to prevent, reduce, or ameliorate poverty both among individuals and in neighborhoods and communities. Community Action Agencies make this promise to the nation:

THE PROMISE OF COMMUNITY ACTION

COMMUNITY ACTION CHANGES PEOPLE’S LIVES,
EMBODIES THE SPIRIT OF HOPE,
IMPROVES COMMUNITIES, AND MAKES AMERICA
A BETTER PLACE TO LIVE.

WE CARE ABOUT THE ENTIRE COMMUNITY,
AND WE ARE DEDICATED TO HELPING PEOPLE
HELP THEMSELVES AND EACH OTHER.



Offering free prostate cancer screenings helps this Arkansas neighborhood ensure that its children will have their dads around for more years to come — reducing family stress, improving health for Dad, and enlisting support for preventive health care for youngsters.

COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCIES THE RESOURCE

COMMUNITY ACTION PARTNERSHIP MISSION

It is the mission of the Community Action Partnership to be a national forum for policy on poverty and to strengthen, promote, represent and serve its network of member agencies to assure that the issues of the poor are effectively heard and addressed.



Some people fix cars for a living, others for love of machines. A Missouri Community Action Agency found a volunteer auto mechanic who loves making cars roadworthy so people can make a living. More than \$13,000 in donated time and parts has meant dozens of formerly out-of-work folks driving to new jobs.

We as Community Action Agencies are the living legacy of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964. We are the local organizations charged with addressing and relieving poverty in communities across the nation. Why have we survived and even thrived? The answer is at once simple and complex.

First, our organizations see economic security and self-sufficiency for the people and neighborhoods we serve as our goals. The programs we run are tools to reach these goals, not ends in themselves. This “eyes on the prize” strategy means that our organizations are driven by results. We recognize and value preventive strategies, and realize the need to work with, not on, the people we serve. It also means that our agencies take a pragmatic approach, seek solutions rather than simply business as usual, and remain close to those with whom we work by engaging them to the maximum extent possible in the development and implementation of program, policy, and advocacy.

Second, our organizations are grounded locally. Almost all of us are members of a national association, but we govern ourselves locally and seek local partnerships and funding as well as resources from national and federal programs, either directly or through state intermediaries. The “community action” phrase that names our organizations defines them. We work with and in communities and neighborhoods, addressing the shared needs and the individual needs of the cities, towns, and counties we serve.

Third, collaboration and partnership define our approach. We reject turf in favor of focus on problem solving. We recognize the leverage gained from linking with other organizations and programs toward shared purpose, which creates energy to meet needs rather than isolation despite joint purpose.

Fourth, our approach is tested and validated by experience. More than 40 years have demonstrated that many of the core values that emerged from the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 might have been idealistic, but they were also effective in all kinds of settings and all kinds of circumstances. Our agencies know that what they do works, which gives them credibility and confidence in good times and bad that they can adhere to their paths while savoring experience.

As our field has matured, we have paid attention to identifying and formalizing core values and strategies. The principles developed by the Community Action Partnership in 2002 (*page 27*) capture shared understanding of how work needs to be done.

As our field has matured, we have paid attention to identifying and formalizing core values and strategies. The principles developed by the Community Action Partnership in 2002 (*page 27*) capture shared understanding of how work needs to be done.

COMMUNITY ACTION IN ACTION

The “community” and “action” aspects of Community Action Agencies are the source of our power and versatility. We strive to empower and enable people and neighborhoods to become self-sufficient economically and engaged productively in the civic life of their community.

Because we harness community resources and energies, our work leverages national, state, and local government investment, as well as corporate backing. In 2005, the most recent available data show, Community Service Block Grant (CSBG) federal funds leveraged almost \$16 worth of funds from other sources, measured nationwide, for every dollar of CSBG funds invested. Almost a third of this amount (\$4.94) represented non-federal funding, including money from state and local governments and the value of volunteers’ time. Non-CSBG federal funds come from grants, contracts, cooperative agreements, and other support for programs and services provided by Community Action Agencies.

As Community Action Agencies, we take on a wide variety of tasks to meet these needs; our work is a living illustration of the need for redefining poverty and “not poverty” as a multi-layered, multi-measured set of distinctions.

COMMUNITY ACTION AT STATE AND NATIONAL LEVELS

Community Action is locally grounded but nationally bonded. More than 1,000 Community Action Agencies in better than 99 percent of the nation’s counties serve almost all of the U.S. population. The overwhelming majority of these agencies are members of the Community Action Partnership, a national group that provides communication, training, technical assistance, public education, and other benefits.

CAPLAW provides legal assistance to Community Action Agencies that need such help, and the National Community Action Foundation provides an advocacy voice for policy. But the Community Action Network engages with other national organizations as well. These partnerships, like those among local Community Action Agencies, leverage resources and enrich efforts at the state and local levels.

Almost every state has a statewide organization of the Community Action Agencies. Each state (as well as Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia) has an office that manages the federal Community Services Block Grant funds that help support the work of local agencies, fund special and demonstration project, and coordinate state priorities. These state agencies have their own national association, the National Association for State Community Services Programs. For more information on these organizations, see page 31.



COMMUNITY ACTION PRINCIPLES

WE OPEN DOORS AND LEAD THE WAY.

WE TURN HOPE INTO REALITY.

WE EMPATHIZE.

WE TREAT PEOPLE WITH RESPECT.

WE SAY “YES,” FINDING SOME WAY TO HELP.

WE GIVE A VOICE TO THOSE IN NEED.

WE MIRROR THE DIVERSITY OF OUR COMMUNITIES THROUGH OUR LOCAL BOARDS.

Volunteer foster grandparents enrich the lives of their young friends, sharing their affection and experience in Illinois.

WE BRING COMMUNITY SERVICES TO COMMUNITY MEMBERS

The variety of work that Community Action Agencies do is astonishing. In addition to developing initiatives to meet local needs and beyond their work in partnership with or on behalf of local and state organizations, these agencies manage a total of nearly 100 distinct Federal programs. Community Action Agencies are without question nexus of much of the nation's on-the-ground anti-poverty work. They are the day-to-day engines of meaningful intervention for people seeking the economic and social betterment that helps them move forward out of poverty. Here are just a few examples (out of thousands) Community Action Agencies' work. They explain how and why these agencies are the nation's premier front-line force to reduce poverty and help people change their lives.

➔ In **Roanoke, Virginia**, **Total Action Against Poverty** combined loans, grants, and housing tax credits to renovate a 225-unit complex so that the numerous low-income families in the community could have safe, attractive, affordable housing.

➔ The **Community Action Agency of Northeastern Alabama** has created **Fathers, Friends, and Families**, which brings together a host of programs for young noncustodial fathers — training in parenting skills, comprehensive family development services, and assistance in learning to manage financial responsibilities. Other practical help — from emergency rent and utilities payments to help in securing job training and employment — is also provided by the agency staff.

➔ In **Maine's Oxford and Franklin Counties**, **Community Concepts, Inc.** (the local Community Action Agency), saw a need for daytime care for the frail elderly and other adults with mental challenges. It created such a program in a homelike setting, now funded chiefly by fees for service, that enables family members to go to work or school without worrying that their loved ones are in danger and alone.

➔ **Hawaii's Honolulu Community Action Partnership** helps prisoners, ex-offenders, and their families through the **Malama Pono** ("Taking Care") program. Trained volunteers from faith-based organizations each spend two hours a week with children who have a parent in prison. Staff members work with other family members as well. After two years, most children had dramatically improved school performance and peer relationships. Four of five family members sought it had found employment and/or housing with help from program staff.

➔ A single Minnesota mother in her 40s, struggling to support herself and her children, became a homeowner thanks to an imaginative combination of programs operated by **West Central Minnesota Communities Action, Inc.** (Elbow Lake). An Individual Development Account matched her savings at a three-to-one rate.



Volunteer Income Tax Assistant helps resident apply for the Earned Income Tax Credit in a Wisconsin community. Millions of dollars in otherwise-unclaimed tax credits and deductions are available to help families make ends meet thanks to this program and its trained volunteers. Community Action Agencies around the nation manage or staff many of these sites.

Financial literacy courses and individual financial counseling helped her learn to manage money. A subsidized mortgage and interest-free gap financing completed the package that put this family into their own home.

➔ In many parts of the U.S. winters can be bone-chilling cold and summers steaming hot. This makes weatherization a good investment — so good that **Community Action of Southeast Iowa** saved residents \$554 on average in heating and cooling costs for the 113 homes weatherized in 2007. In addition to weatherizing homes, the agency does home repairs for needy residents. Weatherization programs not only improve housing but help stretch funds that cover heating and cooling costs.

➔ A **Colorado** resident in his late 20s, Eduardo had emigrated from Central America. He spoke almost no English and was barely able to support himself. To learn English, Eduardo enrolled in the **Pike's Peak Community Action Agency Transitions To Independence Program**. Once he completed that training, he started studying English at the local community college. His case manager heard of an insurance company that was seeking a bilingual agent. Eduardo got the job and continued in college to study for his broker's license. He also enrolled in the Community Action Agency's asset-building program to save for his own home.

➔ **Nevada's Community Services Agency Head Start** joined with the University of **California (Los Angeles) Johnson & Johnson Health Care Literacy Training Program** to develop a three-year education course that helps parents learn to manage their children's health care needs well. Staff training is provided along with the curriculum. The course will become a resource for Head Start programs around the country.

➔ The **Frederick (Maryland) Community Services Agency** has pioneered MEDBANK, which helps low- to moderate-income people secure long-term medications they need but can't afford. MEDBANK links pharmaceutical companies' patient assistance programs with patients who need the companies' drugs. By combining MEDBANK with the RxBridge web-enabled database developed by the agency, one case manager can serve 500 to 600 clients in a given year. Pharmaceutical companies ship 90-day supplies of the drugs to doctors' offices for patients to pick up. A retired married couple with (between them) diabetes, gastric esophageal reflux disease, hypertension, stroke, and pulmonary disease are able to take the medications (otherwise \$1,600 per month) that help them remain independent thanks to this program.

➔ **JumpStart**, a program of **West Central Community Action Agency in Glenwood City, Wisconsin**, recog-

A Wisconsin JumpStart participant gets the keys to a new-to-her, gently used car. JumpStart's low-cost cars for low-income participants have helped them improve both jobs and housing.



An older home in Wisconsin gets upgraded insulation blown in, with lower heating and cooling bills just ahead for the low-income homeowner, thanks to a Community Action weatherization crew.



nizes the fact that for many families, a working car is as vital as a working phone. This program has helped hundreds of low-income families purchase good quality, reliable, fuel-efficient cars for work and for life. JumpStart provides a \$1,500 down payment, but participants must meet payments on a modest car loan. JumpStart also requires participants to pay into a Program Participation Fund that offers grants for participants who find their cars need major repairs. Better than three out of five clients changed jobs because of this program, and all of them said their new jobs were better ones. Half the participants moved to other housing, with three out of four of that group reporting improved rental housing and one in five moving from rental to ownership.

➤ Too many low-income families don't know about or are uncomfortable with the application process for the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) (available on federal tax returns and some state tax returns). Hundreds of **Community Action Agencies in nearly every state** have gone beyond simply providing information. They recruit and train volunteer income tax assistants, who help these families file returns that claim all the appropriate deductions and credits. **Akron (Ohio) Summit Community Action** facilitates an EITC coalition that in one year helped file nearly 900 returns, resulting in \$1.2 million in refunds to families. In **California, the Community Action Partnership of San Bernardino** not only provides free electronic tax filing and resources for help in retroactive filing for prior years' returns, but offers a \$2 for \$1 match for those who invest their refunds in savings plans. **Connecticut's** various volunteer income tax assistance programs generated returns for more than 2,900 individuals and families in 2006 with a total of \$2.6 million in refunds.

➤ Asset building is not about structures — it is about how to secure and increase resources over and above daily necessities that enable lower income individuals and families to achieve their potentials and fulfill their dreams of economic self-sufficiency and security. The **Lincoln (Nebraska) Action Program's Entrepreneur Development Account** helps people learn how to plan, start, operate, and expand viable businesses. Individual Development Accounts match personal savings with equal or greater cash for savings and provides financial literacy education and financial counseling. **Shawnee Development Council in Karnak, Illinois**, celebrated an Individual Development Account success when Valerie, a single mother of three surviving children, went from unemployment to a full-time job and Individual Development Account savings that paid almost a year's worth of college tuition and fees for her eldest son.

➤ Community Action Agencies and Partnerships **across the nation** are key distribution links for state- and federally funded heating assistance, helping hundreds of thousands of households meet gas, oil, or electric heat bills they could not oth-

erwise afford. These heating assistance programs are complemented by the longer-term weatherization projects that help reduce heating and cooling costs.

⇒ Food banks have become a staple of Community Action Agencies, but new ideas keep the programs fresh. **Andy's Garden in Salt Lake City, Utah**, donates 10,000 pounds a year of fresh vegetables to the city's low-income families. **The Joint Council for Economic Opportunity of Clinton and Franklin Counties in New York** provides a \$20 basket of discounted edibles monthly that is available to all comers. In **Kern County (Bakersfield), California**, **Bright House Networks**, a cable company, pledged \$40,000 worth of support to the Partnership's food bank, including \$4,000 cash and a year of public service ads promoting the program and seeking public support.

⇒ The **Utah Community Action Partnership Association** realized that nowhere were all the state data on poverty collected in one place. The *2007 Data Book on Poverty in Utah*, created by the Association, meets that need, using official data sources to present a coherent picture of asset poverty, energy, food, nutrition, health, homelessness, housing, and public assistance. Data are presented in several ways — across time, compared with national data, and county by county.

⇒ In **New Mexico**, state funds helped the Community Action Association provide organizational development and leadership training to the state's Community Action Agencies. In addition to the foundational training, an annual management seminar helps the agencies to focus on self-assessment, improvement plans, and action steps for change.

President Lyndon B. Johnson signs the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 into law.



APPENDIX

STEERING COMMITTEE NATIONAL CONVERSATION ON POVERTY & ECONOMIC SECURITY

- James Norman, Steering Committee Chair, National Conversation on Poverty and Economic Security; President and CEO, Action for a Better Community, Inc., Rochester, New York, and Member, Community Action Partnership Board
- Tim Donnellan, Chair, Community Action Partnership and President and CEO, Community Action Partnership of the Greater Dayton Area, Ohio
- Kip Bowmar, Executive Director, Kentucky Association for Community Action
- Lois Carson, Executive Director, Community Action Partnership of Riverside County, California
- Jeannie Chaffin, Community Services Block Grant Program Manager, Missouri Department of Social Services and Member, National Association for State Community Services Programs (NASCSPP)
- Leonard Dawson, Executive Director, Coastal Georgia Area Community Action Authority, Inc. and Member, Community Action Program Legal Services (CAPLAW)
- Tunde Eboda, Program Manager, District of Columbia Department of Human Resources, and Member, National Association for State Community Services Programs (NASCSPP)
- Connie Greer, Community Services Block Grant Director, Minnesota Office of Economic Opportunity and immediate past President, National Association for State Community Services Programs (NASCSPP)
- Dana Jones, CEO, United Planning Organization, Washington, DC
- Edith Karsky, Executive Director, Connecticut Association for Community Action
- Peter Kilde, Executive Director, West Central Wisconsin Community Action Agency, Inc.
- Barry Lamont, Chair, National Community Action Foundation (NCAF)
- Anita Lichtblau, Executive Director and General Counsel, Community Action Program Legal Services (CAPLAW), Boston, MA
- Ona Porter, Executive Director, Community Action New Mexico
- Meg Power, Senior Advisor, National Community Action Foundation (NCAF)
- Pat Steiger, Member, National Community Action Foundation (NCAF) Board of Directors
- Mary Ann Vandemark, Executive Director, Human Development Commission, Caro, Michigan
- John Wilson, Executive Director, Community Action Association of Pennsylvania

FOUR NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS EMPOWERING COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCIES

The following four national organizations provide support and services that enable the Community Action Network to root out poverty more effectively. These independent organizations also collaborate on various advocacy and policy issues affecting low-income Americans.



The *Community Action Partnership* is the nonprofit, national membership organization representing the interests of the 1,000 Community Action Agencies (CAAs) across the country that annually help 13 million low-income Americans achieve economic security. Whether it's a Head Start program, weatherization, job training, housing, or financial education, CAAs work to make America a better place to live. In order to help CAAs meet the ever-changing needs of their communities, the Partnership publishes a quarterly magazine, provides training and technical assistance opportunities, and sponsors national certification and capacity-building programs.

Website: www.communityactionpartnership.com | **Phone:** 202-265-7546

The *National Community Action Foundation* is the nonprofit Washington, DC-based advocate for the Community Action Network. NCAF formulates and promotes federal legislative and program initiatives to strengthen the Community Action Network's ability to serve low-income families and works with Members of Congress and the executive branches of federal and state governments to maintain funding and support for CAA programs and initiatives. The organization conducts research on legislative and policy proposals affecting the poor and supplies information to federal and other public officials on CAA programs.



Website: www.ncaf.org | **Phone:** 202-842-2092



CAPLAW, a nonprofit membership organization, provides legal resources that help to sustain and strengthen the Community Action Network. Through its in-house legal staff and a network of private attorneys, CAPLAW provides legal consultation, training, and publications on a wide variety of legal and management topics. This assistance enables CAAs to operate more effective organizations and to promote the bona fide participation of low-income people in the planning and delivery of CAA programs and services. CAPLAW's work enhances CAAs' ability to provide the nation's poor with opportunities to improve their quality of life and achieve their full potential.

Website: www.caplaws.org | **Phone:** 617-357-6915

The *National Association for State Community Services Programs* (NASCSPP) is a nonprofit membership organization for state officials who administer community services programs against poverty. NASCSPP's vision encompasses the empowerment of low-income families to reach self-sufficiency in its broadest context, through helping states fully use their resources to implement an extensive array of services to these families, including weatherization, energy assistance, child care, nutrition, employment, state energy programs, job training, and housing. NASCSPP also provides training and technical assistance to states and local agencies in the areas of data collection and Results-Oriented Management and Accountability (ROMA) implementation.



Website: www.nascsp.org | **Phone:** 202-624-5866

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- Principal Writer: Jean F. O'Neil, Aries Consulting
- Layout and Design: Dini Stewart, Community Action Partnership

PHOTO CREDITS

Our thanks for these evocative photos go to the following local agencies (and to many others for the photos they provided, many of which will enrich later reports.

PAGE CREDIT

- 1 *Community Services Block Grant Report FY 2005*, National Association for State Community Services Programs
- 3 Taken in San Diego, CA, August 2007, by staff member of Crowley's Ridge Development Council, Jonesboro, Arkansas
- 5 Mohawk Valley Community Action Agency, Rome, New York
- 6 Lima/Allen Council on Community Affairs, Lima, Ohio
- 8 Community Action Partnership of Ramsey and Washington Counties, St. Paul, Minnesota
- 9 Community Action of Minneapolis, St. Paul, Minnesota
- 10 Head Start, Washita Valley Community Action Council, Chickasa, Oklahoma
- 11 Crowley's Ridge Development Council, Jonesboro, Arkansas
- 12 Macon-Bibb County Equal Opportunity Program, Macon, Georgia
- 13 Photo by Christie, Oakland-Livingston Human Services Agency, Pontiac, Michigan (team from Howell United Methodist Church, Howell, MI)
- 14 Community Action Partnership of Sonoma County, California
- 15 Northeast South Dakota Community Action Program, Sisseton, South Dakota
- 17 Missouri Association for Community Action, Jefferson City, Missouri
- 19 (New House) Knoxville-Knox County Community Action Committee, Knoxville, Tennessee
- 19 (Bus Transportation) Orleans Community Action Committee, Albion, New York
- 21 Knoxville-Knox County Community Action Committee, Knoxville, Tennessee
- 22 Westmoreland Human Opportunities, Greensburg, Pennsylvania
- 23 Central Arkansas Development Council, Benton, Arkansas
- 24 Missouri Valley Community Action Agency, Marshall, Missouri
- 25 Central Illinois Economic Development Corporation, Lincoln, Illinois
- 26 Social Development Commission, Milwaukee, WI
- 27 West Central Community Action Agency, Glenwood City, Wisconsin
- 28 Social Development Commission, Milwaukee, WI
- 29 Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library, Austin, Texas

DULUTH'S BLUEPRINT TO END POVERTY

INVEST IN EDUCATION AND SKILL DEVELOPMENT & IMPROVE ACCESS TO QUALITY EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES.

- Promote and provide a living wage to Duluth workers through a wide variety of employment opportunities in the areas that offer benefits and childcare.
- Put systems in place so that all community members can obtain the necessary skills to get and keep the jobs they want.
- Offer access to and support for programs that help families build up savings or put money on reserve for future investments.
- Develop a wide variety of affordable educational opportunities available to meet the community's diverse needs.

DEVELOP AFFORDABLE, EFFICIENT TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS.

- Develop a well-coordinated public transportation system which offers a wide variety of bus route options and extended service hours on selected routes to meet employment options.
- Promote the value of public transportation for all community members regardless of physical ability or limitations.
- Create and enhance programs that support access to personal vehicles (car purchase and repair initiative) and non-motorized transportation options.

INCREASE ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE HOUSING & CREATE HEALTHY NEIGHBORHOODS.

- Create more options for homeownership; expand affordable rental options and housing assistance.
- Increase the housing stock through tax and policy incentive so that everyone has access to safe, decent, affordable housing.
- Promote community-building programs and landlord/tenant agreements that create and maintain safe, clean neighborhoods that value all citizens.

PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL

- Ensure that Duluthians have the opportunity to be healthy, care for family members, invest in their future and have access to needed support services.
- Increase the availability and quality of childcare and dependent care. Invest in and improve healthcare systems.
- Streamline systems so that accessing supportive resources is convenient and easy.
- Ensure that the organized criminal justice system embrace diversity in its employment and support opportunities for ex-offenders to succeed.

What people are saying about *Rooting Out Poverty*...

Helping people. Changing lives. That is truly what Community Action represents. And the notion that you help people to raise themselves up to empower themselves — you don't just talk, you act. *Rooting Out Poverty* offers realistic strategies and recommendations that promote economic security for all Americans.

Juan Williams, author, Eyes on the Prize and Enough; commentator, National Public Radio and FOX News

I worked in the vineyards of Community Action Agencies in their infancy, and through the years I have seen the amazing things that these groups can achieve. I have also seen the disastrous effects of the nexus of poverty, crime, and hopelessness throughout my career. It's time to take that next step to root out poverty. The Community Action Network is right — America should listen and act.

*John A. Calhoun, President, Hope Matters, Inc.
Founding President/CEO, National Crime Prevention Council*

Rooting Out Poverty builds on the best traditions of progressive thought and practical action. Based on half a century of increasing knowledge and understanding about how to ban poverty from our midst, the Partnership's thoughtful prescriptions can give every American a second chance to live in dignity. As always, we need the wisdom, and especially the will, to act on what is right for America.

Samuel Halperin, Ph.D. former president, Institute for Educational Leadership and American Youth Policy Forum

The Community Action Partnership's campaign to root out poverty builds on the central wisdom of the Community Action model: only if people have the chance to participate in decisions that shape their lives can we build an economy that works for everyone. We hope to join with and learn from Community Action Agencies in this forward-looking campaign to eradicate poverty.

Deborah Weinstein, Executive Director, Coalition on Human Needs

